

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A ~~computer implemented~~ method for prepaying roaming minutes, comprising:

employing a processor to execute the prepaying of roaming minutes, comprising:

crediting a user's account with prepaid roaming minutes purchased by a user, the prepaid roaming minutes comprising units of time for telephone usage outside of a home calling area defined by a user's calling plan, wherein the user's calling plan includes a roaming charge for the prepaid roaming minutes and wherein the home calling area comprises one of a plurality of predefined geographical areas each of which is within a larger predefined geographical area comprising a national calling area;

receiving one of a plurality of access codes before dialing a roaming call, each of the plurality of access codes corresponding to a certain number of the prepaid roaming minutes;

notifying the user of the number of prepaid roaming minutes in the user's account via a display on a wireless telephone associated with the user;

determining whether the prepaid roaming minutes were purchased at a time greater than a predefined time before a call is made, wherein the prepaid roaming minutes are purchased at a discounted rate, wherein the discounted rate is lower than the roaming charge included in the user's calling plan, and wherein the prepaid roaming minutes are subtracted from the user's account at the discounted rate when the prepaid roaming minutes were purchased at a time greater than the predefined time and when the call is made outside the home calling area defined by the user's calling plan; and

determining whether the length of the roaming call is greater than the number of prepaid roaming minutes in the user's account, wherein the difference between the length of the roaming call and the number of prepaid roaming minutes in the user's account is charged as undiscounted roaming when the length of the roaming call is greater than the number of prepaid minutes in the user's account.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
crediting' prepaid roaming minutes at a discounted rate.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
crediting prepaid roaming minutes at a discounted rate proportional to the time purchased.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
crediting a user's account with prepaid roaming minutes periodically.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a purchase order for roaming minutes from a user.
6. (Canceled)
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
deleting the roaming minutes after a predefined time.
8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the predefined time is about six months.
9. (Canceled)
10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the predefined time is about one month.
11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein crediting further comprises:
crediting a user's account with a block of prepaid roaming minutes.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the block of prepaid roaming minutes is in increments of at least about 10 minutes.

13-19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) A telephone system for prepaying roaming minutes, comprising:
a memory for storing executable program code; and
a processor, functionally coupled to the memory, the processor being responsive to computer-executable instructions contained in the program code and operative to:

credit a user's account with prepaid roaming minutes at a discounted rate, the prepaid roaming minutes comprising units of time for telephone usage outside of a home calling area defined by a user's calling plan, wherein the user's calling plan includes a roaming charge for the prepaid roaming minutes and wherein the home calling area comprises one of a plurality of predefined geographical areas each of which is within a larger predefined geographical area comprising a national calling area, wherein the discounted rate is lower than the roaming charge included in the user's calling plan;

receive one of a plurality of access codes before dialing a roaming call, each of the plurality of access codes corresponding to a certain number of the prepaid roaming minutes;

notify the user of the number of prepaid roaming minutes in the user's account via a display on a wireless telephone associated with the user;

determine whether the prepaid roaming minutes were purchased a predefined time before a call is made, wherein the prepaid roaming minutes are purchased at a discounted rate, wherein the discounted rate is lower than the roaming charge included in the user's calling plan, and wherein the prepaid roaming minutes are subtracted from the user's account at the discounted rate when the prepaid roaming minutes were purchased at a time greater than the predefined time and when the call is made outside the home calling area defined by the user's calling plan; and

determine whether the length of the roaming call is greater than the number of prepaid roaming minutes in the user's account, wherein the difference between the length of the roaming call and the number of prepaid roaming minutes in the user's account is charged as undiscounted roaming when the length of the roaming call is greater than the number of prepaid minutes in the user's account.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) The telephone system of claim 20, wherein the processor is operative to allowing the user to access the account over a computer network.
23. (Previously Presented) The telephone system of claim 20, wherein the processor is further operative to protect the account with a password.
24. (Previously Presented) The telephone system of claim 22, wherein the user's account is accessed over the computer network using voice mail.
25. (Previously Presented) The telephone system of claim 20 further comprising, a wireless telephone.
26. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 20 further comprising, a digital telephone.